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THE PRINTED BOOK

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The Printed Book

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*The Printed Book / Its History, Illustration and Adornment, from the Days
of / Gutenberg to the Present Time:*

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PREFACE

CONSIDERING that this short study can claim to be nothing more than a rapid and somewhat summary survey of the history of The Book, it eschews all controversial matter, nor does it pretend to convey much fresh information to those already possessing a special knowledge of the subject. It is rather a condensed, but at the same time, it may be hoped, a useful, compendium of the thousand unknown or now forgotten essays, involving endless contradictory statements, that have been issued on this theme. The mere enumeration of such works would simply suffice to fill a volume. We have accordingly no intention to attempt a bibliography, satisfying ourselves with the modest avowal of having found so many documents in all languages, that the very abundance has been at least as embarrassing to us as the

lack of materials may have been to others.

The Book appealing in its present form to a special public interested more in artistic than in purely typographical topics, our attention has been more particularly given to the illustrators, the designers, engravers, etchers, and so forth. Such graphic embellishment seemed to us of more weight than the manufacture of the paper, the type-casting, the printing properly so called. This technical aspect of the subject has been very briefly dealt with in a separate chapter, and has also been enlarged upon in the early section. To the binding also we have devoted only a single chapter, while fully conscious that a whole volume would not have sufficed merely to treat the subject superficially.

At the same time, we would not have the reader conclude from all this that our book abounds in omissions, or has overlooked any important features. The broad lines, we trust, have been adhered to, while each section has been so handled as to give a fair idea of the epoch it deals with. This is the first attempt to comprise within such narrow limits an art and an industry with a life of over four centuries, essaying to describe its beginnings and its history down to our days, without omitting a glance at the allied arts.

The engravings selected for illustration have, as far as possible, been taken from unedited materials, and have been directly reproduced by mechanical processes, while fifteen new illustrations, having special relation to the history of the Book in England, have been added to this edition, which is also

considerably enlarged in the text on the same subject.

CHAPTER I

14. TO 1462

Origin of the Book – Engravers in relief – The St. Christopher of 1423 – Origin of the Xylographs – The Xylographs, *Donatus*, and *Speculum* – The Laurent Coster legend – From block books to movable characters – John Gaensefleisch, called Gutenberg – The Strasbourg trial – Gutenberg at Mayence – Fust and Schoeffer – The letters of indulgence – The Bible – The Catholicon – The Mayence Bible – Causes of the dispersion of the first Mayence printers – General considerations.

LIKE its forerunner, Painting, the Book has ever been the most faithful reflection of the times when it was written and illustrated. Natural and genuine from the first, and simply embellished with crude illustrations, it assumed in the sixteenth century the grand airs of the Renaissance, gay or serious according to circumstances, decked in what were then called *histoires* – that is to say, wonderful engravings – and daintily printed in Gothic, Roman, or choice Italic characters. But at the close of the century it had already abandoned *wood* for line engravings, heightening its mysticism or its satire at the whim of passing politics and religious wranglings. Then, under the influence of the painters and courtiers of the *Grand Monarque*,

it becomes completely transformed, donning the peruke, so to speak, indulging in allegory and conventionalities, pompous and showy, tricking itself out in columns and pilasters instead of the old arabesques and scroll work of the Renaissance, thus continuing amid the coquetries of the regency, the pastorals and insipidities of the following reigns, until at last it suddenly assumes with the heroes of the Revolution the austere mien and airs of classic art. The Book has always been as closely connected with the manners of our predecessors as art itself. The artist submits more than he thinks to the tendency of his surroundings; and if he at times makes his taste appreciated, it is because he has more or less received his first influence from others.

In the sixteenth century the fashion of emblematic representation placed under the portrait of Gaston de Foix a figure of a young plant in full bloom; and the inscription in Latin was "Nascendo maturus" – "Mature at birth." The Book deserves the same device; from its first day up to now it is a marvel of simplicity and harmony. The tentative efforts which preceded the discovery of printing were but few; it may be said that from the moment that Gutenberg conceived the idea of separating the characters, of arranging the words in the forme, of inking them, and of taking a proof on paper, the Book was perfect. At best we see in following times some modifications of detail; the art of printing was mature, mature from its birth.

But before arriving at the movable type placed side by side, and forming phrases, which appears to us to-day so simple and

so ordinary, many years passed. It is certain that long before Gutenberg a means was found of cutting wood and metal in relief and reproducing by application the image traced. Signs-manual and seals were a kind of printing, inasmuch as the relief of their engraving is impressed upon a sheet by the hand. But between this simple statement and the uncritical histories of certain special writers, attributing the invention of engraving to the fourteenth century, there is all the distance of legendary history. Remembering that the numerous guilds of *tailleurs d'images*, or sculptors in relief, had in the Middle Ages the specialty of carving ivories and of placing effigies on tombs, it can be admitted without much difficulty, that these people one day found a means of multiplying the sketches of a figure often asked for, by modelling its contour in relief on ivory or wood, and afterwards taking a reproduction on paper or parchment by means of pressure. When and where was this discovery produced? We cannot possibly say; but it is certain that playing cards were produced by this means, and that from the year 1423 popular figures were cut in wood, as we know from the St. Christopher of that date belonging to Lord Spencer.

It is not our task to discuss this question at length, nor to decide if at first these reliefs were obtained on wood or metal. It is a recognised fact that the single sheet with a printed figure preceded the xylographic book in which text and illustration were cut in the same block. This process did not appear much before the second quarter of the fifteenth century, and it was employed

principally for popular works which were then the universal taste. The engraving also was nothing more than a kind of imposition palmed off as a manuscript; the vignettes were often covered with brilliant colours and gold, and the whole sold as of the best quality.

The first attempts at these little figures in relief discovered by the image-makers and diffused by the makers of playing cards were but indifferent. The drawing and the cutting were equally unskilful, as may be seen in the facsimiles given by M. H. Delaborde in his *Histoire de la Gravure*. An attempt had been made to put some text at the foot of the St. Christopher of 1423, and the idea of giving more importance to the text was to the advantage of the booksellers. At the mercy of the writers who fleeced them, obliged to recoup themselves by the exaggerated prices of the most ordinary books, they hoped to turn engraving to account in order to obtain on better terms the technical work needed for their trade. At the epoch of the St. Christopher, in 1423, several works were in vogue in the universities, the schools, and with the public. Among the first of these was the Latin Syntax of Ælius Donatus on the eight parts of speech, a kind of grammar for the use of young students, as well as the famous *Speculum*, a collection of precepts addressed to the faithful, which were copied and recopied without satisfying the demand.

To find a means of multiplying these treatises at little cost was a fortune to the inventor. It is to be supposed that many

artisans of the time attempted it; and without doubt it was the booksellers themselves, mostly mere dealers, who were tempted to the adventure by the sculptors and wood-cutters. But none had yet been so bold as to cut in relief a series of blocks with engravings and text to compose a complete work. That point was reached very quickly when some legend was engraved at the foot of a vignette, and it may be thought that the *Donatus* was the most ancient of books so obtained among the "Incunabuli," as we now call them, a word that signifies origin or cradle.

The first books then were formed of sheets of paper or parchment, laboriously printed from xylographic blocks, that is to say wooden blocks on which a *tailleur d'images* had left in relief the designs and the letters of the text. He had thus to trace his characters in reverse, so that they could be reproduced as written; he had to avoid faults, because a phrase once done, well or ill, lasted. It was doubtless this difficulty of correction that gave the idea of movable types. If the cutter seriously erred, it was necessary to cancel altogether the faulty block. This at least explains the legend of Laurent Coster, of Haarlem, who, according to Hadrian Junius, his compatriot, discovered by accident the secret of separate types while playing with his children. And if the legend of which we speak contains the least truth, it must be found in the sense above indicated, that is in the correction of faults, rather than in the innocent game of a merchant of Haarlem. However, we shall have occasion to return to the subject of these remarks. It should be well established

that engraving in relief on wood alone gave the idea of making xylographic blocks and of composing books. Movable type, the capital point of printing, the pivot of the art of the Book, developed itself little by little, according to needs, when there was occasion to correct an erroneous inscription; but, in any case, its origin is unknown. Doubtless to vary the text, means were found to replace entire phrases by other phrases, preserving the original figures; and thus the light dawned upon these craftsmen, occupied in the manufacture and sale of their books.

According to Hadrian Junius, Laurent Janszoon Coster (the latter name signifying "the discoverer") published one of the celebrated series of works under the general title of *Speculum* which was then so popular (the mystic style exercising so great an attraction on the people of the fifteenth century), the *Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*. Written before the middle of the fifteenth century, made popular by manuscripts, in spite of its fantastic Latinity and of its false quantities, this ascetic and crude poem was easy of access to the xylographists. Junius, as we see, attributes to Laurent Coster the first impression of the *Speculum*, no longer the purely xylographic impression of the *Donatus* from an engraved block, but that of the more advanced manner in movable types. In point of fact, this book had at least four editions, similar in engravings and body of letters, but of different text. It must then be admitted that the fount was dispersed, and typography discovered, because the same cast of letters could not be adapted to different languages. On the

other hand, the vignettes do not change, indicating sufficiently the mobility of the types. In comparison to what may be seen in later works, the illustrations of the *Speculum* are by no means bad; they have the appearance, at once naïve and picturesque, of the works of Van Eyck, and not at all of the style of the German miniaturists; properly illuminated and gilded, they lent themselves to the illusion of being confounded with the *histoyres*, drawn by the hand, and this is what the publisher probably sought.

All the xylographic works of the fifteenth century may be classed in two categories: the xylographs, rightly so called, or the block books, such as the *Donatus*, and the books with movable types, like the *Speculum*, of which we speak. This mystic and simple literature of pious works for the use of people of modest resources found in printing the means of more rapid reproduction. Then appeared the *Biblia Pauperum*, one of the most celebrated and the most often reproduced, and the *Ars Moriendi*, a kind of dialogue between an angel and a devil at the bedside of a dying person, which, inspired no doubt by older manuscripts, retained for a long time in successive editions the first tradition of its designs. On labels displayed among the figures are found inscribed the dialogue of the demons and angels seeking to attach to themselves the departing soul, the temptations of Satan on the subject of faith, and the responses of the angel on the same subject.

We can see what developments this theme could lend to the

mysticism of the fifteenth century. Composed in eleven designs, the *Ars Moriendi* ran up to eight different editions. From the middle to the end of the fifteenth century, the text was in Latin, then in French, under the title *L'Art au Morier*. In the French edition will be found the blocks that served for the second impression of the work. About 1480, more than fifty years after the first essays, the *Ars Moriendi* enjoyed so much vogue that it employed all the resources of typography as much as in its earliest days. The original subjects, copied in a very mediocre manner, adorned the text, which was composed in Gothic letters, with a new and more explicit title: *Tractatus brevis ac valde utilis de Arte et Scientia bene moriendi* (4to, s.l.n.d.), but the order is inverted, figure 5 of the xylograph becoming No. 3 of the edition of 1480.

The *Ars Memorandi*, another xylographic work, of which the subject, taken from the New Testament, was equally well adapted to the imagination of the artists, had also a glorious destiny. The work originally comprised thirty blocks, the fifteen blocks of text facing the fifteen engravings. The designs represented the attributes of each of the Evangelists, with allegories and explanatory legends. Thus, in that which relates to the Apostle Matthew,

- No. 1 represents the birth and genealogy of Jesus Christ,
- No. 2 the offerings of the Magi,
- No. 3 the baptism of St. John,
- No. 4 the Temptation of Christ,

No. 5 the Sermon on the Mount,

No. 6 the parable of the birds.

The angel that supports the whole is the emblem of St. Matthew the Evangelist.

This mnemonic treatment of the Gospels began with symbols of which we have no means of finding the origin, but which without doubt were employed many centuries earlier. However that may be, their success was as great as that of the already-quoted works. In 1505 a German publisher put forth an imitation, under the title of *Rationarium Evangelistarum*; and this time the copier of the illustrations, retaining the tradition of the first xylographers, no less reveals an artist of the first order, at least a pupil of Martin Schongauer. Some of the conceptions of the *Rationarium* recall exactly the engravings of the great German master, among others that of the Infant Jesus (plate 12), which nearly approaches the style of the Infant Jesus of Schongauer; besides, the principal figures leave but little doubt on the subject. The same wings are on the angels and on the eagles, the same coiffures on the human characters, often the same attitudes.

From the preceding can be judged the extraordinary favour these productions enjoyed. From their origin they were diffused through the whole of Europe, and attracted the attention of excellent artists. Nevertheless their beginnings were difficult. The movable types used, cut separately in wood, were not constituted to give an ideal impression. We can understand the cost that the execution of these characters must have occasioned,

made as they were one by one without the possibility of ever making them perfectly uniform. Progress was to substitute for this irregular process types that were similar, identical, easily produced, and used for a long time without breaking. Following on the essays of Laurent Coster, continuous researches bore on this point; but as the invention was said to be his, and it being of importance to him not to divulge it, so that he should not lose his profit, much time was lost over it in his workshop without much success. Here history is somewhat confused. Hadrian Junius positively accuses one of Laurent Coster's workmen of having stolen the secrets of his master and taken flight to Mayence, where he afterwards founded a printing office. According to Junius, the metal type was the discovery of the Dutchman, and the name of the thief was John. Who was this John? Was it John Gaensefleisch, called Gutenberg, or possibly John Fust? But it is not at all apparent that Gutenberg, a gentleman of Mayence, exiled from his country, was ever in the service of the Dutch inventor. As to Fust, we believe his only intervention in the association of printers of Mayence was as a money-lender, from which may be comprehended the unlikelihood of his having been with Coster, the more so as we find Gutenberg retired to Strasbourg, where he pursued his researches. There he was, as it were, out of his sphere, a ruined noble whose great knowledge was bent entirely on invention. Doubtless, like many others, he may have had in his hands one of the printed works of Laurent Coster, and conceived the idea of appropriating the

infant process. In 1439 he was associated with two artisans of the city of Strasbourg, ostensibly in the fabrication of mirrors, which may be otherwise understood as printing of *Speculums*, the Latin word signifying the same thing. These men needed to surround themselves with precautions; printing was as yet only a practical means of multiplying manuscripts, to impose a little on the innocent, and fortune awaited him who, without saying anything, made this invention serve him. The following will prove this, as well as its tendency.

A legal document discovered in 1760 by Wencker and Schoepflin in the Pfennigthurm of Strasbourg, and afterwards translated into French by M. Leon de Laborde, makes us at length acquainted with the work of Gutenberg and of his associates Andrew Dritzehen and Andrew Heilmann. Apparently these three men were, as we have said, *Spiegelmacher*, that is makers of mirrors. They had jointly entered into a deed by the terms of which, if one of the partners died in the course of their researches, his heirs would have no rights beyond an indemnity corresponding to the amount invested by him. It happened that Andrew Dritzehen did die, and that one of his brothers aspired to occupy his place in the partnership. The dead man left debts behind him; he had squandered his florins by hundreds in his experiments. Gutenberg having offered to pay the amounts expended, the heirs of Dritzehen, who wanted more, summoned him before the courts to show why he should not make place for them in the work of experiments and making of mirrors.

The witnesses in their testimony before the court told what they knew of the inventions of the partnership. One among them deposed that after the death of Dritzehen, Gutenberg's servant went to the workshop and begged Nicholas Dritzehen, brother of the deceased, to displace and break up four formes placed in a press. A second testified that the works of Andrew had cost him at the least three hundred florins, an enormous sum for those days. Other witnesses painted Gutenberg in a curious light: they made him out to be a savage, a hermit, who concealed from his associates certain arts of which the deed stipulated nothing. One fact proved that the experiments referred to the manufacture of metallic characters. A goldsmith, named Dünne, maintained that he had received more than a hundred florins for printing material "das zu dem trucken gehoret." "Trucken!" – "Typography!" The word was found, and from that day usage has consecrated it.

Before 1439, then, John Gaensefleisch, or Gutenberg, was devoted to the art of reproduction of texts, and had consecrated his life and feeble resources to it. Three problems presented themselves to him. He wanted types less fragile than wooden types and less costly than engraving. He wanted a press by the aid of which he could obtain a clear impression on parchment or paper. He desired also that the leaves of his books should not be anopistograph, or printed only on one side. There were many unknown things to vex his soul, of which he himself alone could have a presentiment. Until then, and even long after, the xylographs were printed *au froton* or with a brush, rubbing the

paper upon the forme coated with ink, thicker than ordinary ink. He dreamed of something better.

In the course of his work John Gutenberg returned to Mayence. The idea of publishing a Bible, the Book of books, had taken possession of his heart. The *Spiegelmacher* of Strasbourg was on the road to loss. The cutting of his types had ruined him, and on his arrival in his native town, his stock in trade, transported by him, was of no great weight: some boxes of type, an inconvenient forme, and perhaps an ordinary press, a wine-maker's press, with a wooden screw. The idea of using this unwieldy instrument for the impression of his formes had already occurred to him; but would not the *frotton* serve still better? The force of the blow from the bar would break the miserable type, the raised parts of which could not resist the repeated strokes. In this unhappy situation, Gutenberg made the acquaintance of a financier of Mayence, named Fust, who was in search of a business, and who put a sum of eleven hundred florins at his disposal to continue his experiments. Unfortunately this money disappeared, it melted away, and the results obtained were absolutely ludicrous.

It is certain that John Fust did not enter on the engagement without protecting himself. From the first he bound his debtor in a contract for six per cent. interest, besides a share in the profits. In addition he stipulated repayment in case of failure. Gutenberg, improvident, as is the way of inventors, had signed away all that he possessed to procure funds. It is presumed, besides, that

during the continuance of his investigations, he composed some current books with the resources at his disposal, that served a little to lighten his debts. But the printing house of the Zum Jungen at Mayence was far from shining in the world, because the association of Fust concerned itself only with the publication of a Bible, and not at all with the *Speculums* and *Donatuses* that were so much in vogue at this time. Besides, the money-lender made a point of pressing his debtor, and did not allow him any leisure to labour outside the projected work. About this time a third actor enters on the scene. Peter Schoeffer, of Gernsheim, a writer, introduced into the workshop of Gutenberg to design letters, benefited by the abortive experiments, and taking up the invention at its deadlock, conducted it to success. John of Tritenheim, called Trithemius, the learned abbot of Spanheim, is the person who relates these facts; but as he got his information from Schoeffer himself, too much credence must not be given to his statements. Besides, Schoeffer was not at all an ordinary artisan. If we credit a Strasbourg manuscript written by his hand in 1449, he was a student of the "most glorious university of Paris." In the workshop of Gutenberg, his industrious and inventive intellect found a fecund mine, and this caligraphist dreamt of other things than shaping letters for the use of wood engravers. Gutenberg, arrested in his career by the wants of life, the worries of business, and perhaps also the fatigues of his labours, may have let the new-comer know something of his experiences. One cannot know, but it is certain that, shortly after,

John Fust was so fascinated by Schoeffer, so attracted by his youth and his application, that he resolved to put new capital into the business. He did more: to permanently attach him, he gave him his grand-daughter in marriage, not his daughter, as was thought until M. Auguste Bernard rectified this mistake.

We have now come to 1453, the year preceding the first dated monument of printing in movable types: *the letters of indulgence*. It may be acknowledged that the sudden affection of Fust for his workman depended on some interested motive, and not at all on attraction of the heart. Had this former student of the university of Paris found the means of rapidly founding metallic types, the search for which had cost Gutenberg many sleepless nights? Had he completed it by applying to it the matrix and punch which had then and for centuries served the makers of seals and the money-coiners? Perhaps, as was most probable, the two associates had agreed, and putting their experiences together, had conquered hitherto insurmountable difficulties.

The year 1454 witnessed the diffusion throughout Christendom of letters of indulgence, accorded by Pope Nicholas V., who wished to aid in funds the King of Cyprus against the Turks. These circular letters, scattered by thousands to every corner of the world, employed numerous copyists. Arrived at Mayence, the distributors found a workshop ready prepared to furnish copies in the shortest possible time. They set to work and brought together all the type they possessed, cast or engraved, to set up these famous letters. Among the impressions was

that of which we give a reproduction, which belongs to the edition called that of thirty-one lines. The original was delivered for a consideration to Josse Ott von Mospach on the 31st of December, 1454.

It is not without interest, for the history of the Book and of printing, to note here that these letters of indulgence, the clandestine traffic in which was largely accelerated by rapidity of production and the small cost of each copy, formed one of the causes of the religious reform of Martin Luther. They afforded a means of raising money, and were so generally resorted to that in the register of the Hotel de Ville of Paris preserved in the Archives Nationales (H 1778) it may be seen that the sheriffs requested the Pope to allow them to employ them in the reconstruction of the bridge at the Hotel de Ville.

The ice once broken, Fust and Schoeffer found it hard to nourish a useless mouth. For them Gutenberg was more of a hindrance than a profit, and they sought brutally to rid themselves of him. Fust had a most easy pretext, which was to demand purely and simply from his associate the sums advanced by him, and which had produced so little. Gutenberg had probably commenced his Bible, but, in face of the claims of Fust, he had to abandon it altogether, types, formes, and press.

In November, 1455, he had retired to a little house outside the city, where he tried his best, by the aid of foreign help, to establish a workshop, and to preserve the most perfect secrecy. Relieved of his company, Fust and Schoeffer were able to take

up the impression of the Bible and to complete it without him. If matters did so happen, and Schoeffer had not the excuse that he had previously discovered the casting of type, there is but one word to designate his conduct: robbery, and moral robbery, the worst of all. But what can be said to-day of these people?

One thing is certain: that the Bible of Schoeffer, commenced by Gutenberg or not, put on sale by Fust and Schoeffer alone about the end of 1455 or beginning of 1456, proves to be the first completed book. Retired to his new quarters, Gutenberg was taking courage, so as not to appear too much behindhand, but the reconstitution of his workshop cost him enormous time. And, besides, he missed the letter-maker Schoeffer, his own Gothic letters, engraved on steel with a punch, not having the same elegance. When his work appeared, it could not sustain comparison. The Bible of Schoeffer was more compact, the impression was more perfect, the ink better, the type less irregular. The original inventor, in his business with Fust, made an unhappy competition for himself. We give here a fragment of this celebrated book, a kind of mute witness of the science and mortifications of the first printer. It is now called the Mazarine Bible, from the fact that the copy in the Mazarin Library was the first to give evidence concerning it. The book was put on sale at the end of 1455 or beginning of 1456, for a manuscript note of a vicar of St. Stephen at Mayence records that he finished the binding and illuminating of the first volume on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1456, and the second on the 15th of August.

St. Bartholomew's Day is the 13th of June, and not the 24th of August, as the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale has it.

All these remarks show that the printers did not proclaim themselves, and were making pseudo-manuscripts. They did not make known their names or address. The rubricators sided with them, for many of the copies are illuminated with as much care and beauty as if they were the finest manuscripts.

There is no record extant of the number of copies printed, but it was done on both vellum and paper. Copies are by no means uncommon, most of the great libraries having one, and many are in private collections. One is shown among the typographical monuments in the King's Library of the British Museum, and there is a finely illuminated copy in the show-room of the Bibliothèque Nationale. From its very great importance as the first book that is known to have been printed, its value has a constant increase. Of the copies recently sold, one at the Perkins sale in 1873 on vellum sold for £3,400, another on paper at the same sale fetched £2,900, while one on paper in the Syston Park Library sold in December, 1884, for £3,900. It has been asserted that the copies on paper were the first issued by Gutenberg and his partners, and those on vellum subsequently printed by Fust and Schoeffer, after they had obtained possession of the inventor's stock.

But so many copies absolutely similar in aspect, and of so regular a style, put in the market from day to day by Fust and Schoeffer, gave rise to protests from the caligraphists. Criticism

always attends upon success, but having obtained the result, the two associates did not hesitate to proclaim themselves the printers of the Bible. On the publication of the Psalter, which followed the Bible at a year's interval, they gave their names and added a date, 1457, the first instance of a date being recorded in a book. This second work was of so skilful a typography, that it might have been shown as the work of an expert penman; the faults remarked in the letters of indulgence are no longer seen; type had attained perfection; in two years printing had reached its culminating point.

In spite of his disappointments, Gutenberg did not rest idle. If he had seen his two enemies rob him of his claim of priority in the invention, he had to show that, reduced to his own exertions and to the restricted means furnished him by charitable people, he also could print well. Two years after the Bible a dated book, composed in Gothic letters, appeared at Mayence; this was the *Catholicon* of John Balbus, of Genoa. It had not yet occurred to these first printers to exercise their art otherwise than on religious works. It is admitted by general opinion that the *Catholicon* issued from the press of Gutenberg; on the other hand, M. Bernard believes that it ought to be attributed to a printer of Eltvil, who published in 1467 a vocabulary called the *Vocabularium ex quo* with the same types. The former theory may be sustained by the words of the colophon of the book, which is a sort of hymn to God and a recognition of the city of Mayence without any mention of the name of the printer. Now in

the situation in which Gutenberg found himself, in the face of his rivals, had he not some claim to regard the great discovery as his own? But if M. Bernard is mistaken, and if our supposition has no foundation, what a beautiful act of humility, what a noble idea of his character, Gutenberg gives us in writing, "With the aid of the Most High, Who releases the tongues of infants and often reveals to babes that which is sealed to learned men, this admirable book the *Catholicon* was finished in the year of the incarnation of our Saviour MCCCCLX. in the mother-country of Mayence, famous city of Germany, which God, in His clemency, has deigned to render the most illustrious and the first of cities; and this book was perfected without the usual help of pen or style, but by the admirable linking of formes and types"!

The history of these men, it is easy to understand, has to be regarded with caution, people of so little consequence then that the authentic documents relating to them have for ever disappeared. If we except that of the Pfennigthurm of Strasbourg, of which we have before spoken, and the deed of claim for money from Fust to Gutenberg dated 1455, we are forced to quote from authors living long afterwards, who submitted, without knowing better, to the miserable errors of oral tradition. It is nearly always the same with men who have occupied a large place in the history of art; posterity only knows of their genius at the time when no one knows anything of them. For Gutenberg the situation was still more terrible; a rival, Peter Schoeffer, survived him, and he did not for his own

reputation care to preserve his rival's memory; and if, as is believed, Gutenberg left pupils and heirs, Henry Bechtermuncze, Ulrich Zell, and Weigand Spyes, his misfortune is crowned by Bechtermuncze being now reputed to be the printer of the *Catholicon*, of which we have just given the history. Even Albert Pfister, one of his workmen, dismissed at the end of his work, having obtained from his master some rejected types, was presumed later to have invented printing. We find this artisan established at Bamberg about 1460, composing Bibles in movable types, the first known being that published in 1461. But Albert Pfister showed that he was not at all an inventor by the mediocrity of his work, and more by the old types that he used. If he had known the secret of engraving the punches, he would have cast new letters and have given a better aspect to his work.

In these statements all is supposition and contradiction. That which is certain – and the dates are there to prove it – is the enormous progress in the productions of Peter Schoeffer. In 1459 he published his third book, Durand's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, in folio. As in the Psalter, Schoeffer employed initial letters printed in red, which the rival workshop could not do in the *Catholicon*, the rubrics of which are painted by hand, as in manuscripts. In time he put forth a second edition of the Psalter, always with Fust's name joined to his own. A great number of types were broken at the beginning, but he dreamed of doing yet better. In 1460 he gave the *Constitutiones* of Pope Clement V., with a gloss and commentaries by John André; here was the

first example of a process much employed in manuscripts, but of which the typographical composition was very difficult. Again, in 1462 a new Latin Bible issued from their workshops in two folio volumes. It is the first dated edition. The first volume has two hundred and forty-two folios in double columns, the second two hundred and thirty-nine. It commences with an epistle of St. Jerome, and on the last leaf of the second volume is the colophon on the preceding page.

This book, one of the first worthy of the name, and which is called by preference the Mayence Bible, appeared in one of the most troubled epochs that the episcopal city had had to go through. Subject to its archbishops, who were at the head of all the lay lords and fighting men, the city found itself in 1462 the prey of two prelates of equal title who refused to give way to one another: Thierry of Isembourg and Adolph of Nassau-Wiesbaden. Adolph surprised Mayence on the 27th October, 1462, pursuing his adversary, who scaled the walls with a rope to escape quicker, and the city was sacked and pillaged from its foundations. In the middle of this turmoil, what became of the obscure persons who were then the printers of the Bible? Doubtless their insignificance saved them from disaster, but as it was long before peace was re-established, and the entire edition of their last volume could not be kept back, we incline to believe that they were for a time going about the country as itinerant booksellers. Paris was to them a well-indicated point of travel – Paris, toward which all German commerce tended.

The university where Peter Schoeffer was instructed in letters, and that truly passed for the first in Europe, appeared to them a market of the first order. If we may believe Walchius (*Decas fabularum generis humani*: Strasbourg, 1609, 4to, p. 181), John Fust himself went to that city, where he put books on sale from sixty crowns a copy, then fifty, then forty, according to the prevailing system in matters of discount. Fust was above all things a merchant; he led it to be believed that he had the marvellous establishment of a copyist beyond the Rhine, and he had disposed of many copies, when the corporate scribes of the university, becoming aware of the imposition, cried out furiously and declared it a diabolical invention. We may now take this tale of Walchius as a fable, as the registers of Parliament, on being consulted, rest silent on the proceedings instituted against the "magician" of Mayence. Only we must not lose sight of the fact that the booksellers had their masters, their syndicate, if we may use the modern word, charged to prohibit fraudulent publications. They were too much interested in the suppression of printed books to judge the matter coldly. The Parliament had nothing to see to in this.

The revolution of Mayence had otherwise great results, which were not affected by these minor reverses. The printing workshops, or at least the successors of Gutenberg, began to be dispersed, and Fust and Schoeffer having established a school of printers in the city, their trade was no longer secret. Deprived of their liberties by the new Archbishop, many of them

expatriated themselves. We shall take occasion later to name some of these exiles, through whom the art of printing spread itself almost simultaneously throughout the world: to Cologne and Strasbourg, to Italy and Spain, without reckoning Holland, France, Switzerland, and the country around Mayence. We have before named the episcopal city of Bamberg; it had the singular fortune to be the second city to possess a printing office, but it disappeared as quickly as it was established, with Albert Pfister, without leaving the least trace; we do not find printing there again before 1480, more than twenty years later.

Gutenberg was dead before 1468. He was interred in the Church of the Récollets of Mayence, by the pious care of a friend, who attributed the invention of printing to him on his tomb.

We may begin to comprehend the influence of this man upon the discovery of which all the world was then talking, but the troubles of the archiepiscopal city hampered the respective merit of the inventors. Peter Schoeffer and John Fust were not much affected by the political crisis. After two years' suspension, they reappeared with a Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1465, quarto, always at work and always surpassing themselves. This time they freely gave up religious publications, and, still more extraordinary, they employed Greek types.

Such is, detached from the incredible contradictions of writers on art, and sketched solely on its main lines, the origin of printing as it is established at this day. First came the image engraved in

relief, which we have not gone to China to find, with some of our predecessors. Upon this image were often cut, by the same economical process, legends of explanation that presented the idea of imitation of manuscript; and the xylographs appeared with or without illustrations. Then from the correction of errors in these books followed the discovery of movable characters. This wooden type, possible when it was used with a *frotton* for printing, would quickly break under the press, the idea of which was gained from the common press of the wine-makers. Then a kind of metallic type had to be found which would run in a mould struck by a punch. This punch was not invented for the purpose; it served previously for the makers of coins and seals. The fabrication of type from the matrix was a simple adoption. The lead thrown into the matrix gave the desired type. Thus were made the first books, of which we have briefly related the composition.

As to the proportion of glory due to each one of the first printers, it is necessary equally, to guard against error on one side or the other. We have sought to separate from the heap of publications probable opinions or those based on certain documents. That the origin of the *Donatus*, the block books, was Dutch would be puerile to deny, because, on one side, the engravings on blocks are surely of the school of Van Eyck, and, on the other hand, Ulrich Zell, who inspired the "Cologne Chronicle" of 1499, assigned positively to Holland the cradle of the *Donatus*. At any rate, it was a pupil of Gutenberg, a question

we have discussed. After that we will trouble ourselves but little about Laurent Coster. The name makes no difference in a matter of this kind.

As to Gutenberg, we have not been able to go as far as M. E. Dutuit, who in his *Manuel a'Estampes* (vol. i., p. 236, etc.) doubts Gutenberg's right to the title of inventor. It is stated that in a letter of William Fichet, prior of the Sorbonne, of whom we shall have more to say presently, to Robert Gaguin, which M. A. Claudin found at the beginning of a work entitled *Gasparim Pergamensis orthographiæ liber*, published in 1470, nearly twenty years after the first work at Mayence, Gutenberg is proclaimed the inventor of printing. Without any other, this testimony of a *savant* who was the first to bring the German printers to Paris appears to us well nigh irrefutable.

As to John Fust and his grandson by marriage, Peter Schoeffer, they are so well defended by their works, that there is no more to say here; doubtless grave presumptions arise as to the delicacy of their conduct with Gutenberg, but we are not so bold as to censure them beyond measure. We know nothing precise either of the time or of the men.

Let us now imagine humble workmen, the most simple of *gens de mestiers*, to employ the French expression then in use, shut up in a kind of dark workshop, like a country forge, formed in little groups of two or three persons, one designing and the other cutting the wood, having near them a table, on which is held the engraved block after its reliefs have been rubbed with sombre

ink, who afterwards, by means of the *frotton*, apply the damped paper to the raised parts of the block; we shall have without much stretch of thought all the economy of the xylographic impression. If we add to this primitive workshop the matrix in which the types are cast, the box in which they are distributed, the forme on which they are arranged to compose the pages, and a small hand-press, with blacker ink and paper damped to permit the greasy ink to take better, we have a picture of the work-room of Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer, and of the first printers with movable types.

Thus typography was born of painting, passing in its infancy through wood-cutting, revolutionising ideas and somewhat the world. But the mighty power of the new art was not confined to itself; it extended the circle of engraving, which till then had suffered from the enormous difficulties of reproduction. As if the time were ripe for all these things, nearly at the moment when the first printers were distinguishing themselves by serious works, a Florentine goldsmith accidentally discovered the cutting of cast metal.¹ What would have become of this new process if the presses of Gutenberg had not brought their powerful assistance to the printing of engravings? It will be found then that printing rendered a hundredfold to engraving for that which it received from it and bore it along with its own rapid advance.

Then reappeared, following the new processes, the figures

¹ The opinion that Finiguerra was the unconscious inventor of casting engravings is now abandoned.

somewhat abandoned by the Mayence workmen during the period of transformation. Our object is to speak at length of the Book ornamented and illustrated according to the means of relief-cutting or casting; to demonstrate the influence of painting, of sculpture, of art, on the production of the Book; and thus to help the reader at the same time to understand the almost sudden and irresistible development of typography, and to mention its foremost representatives.

CHAPTER II

1462 TO 1500

The Book and the printers of the second generation – The German workmen dispersed through Europe – Caxton and the introduction of printing into England – Nicholas Jenson and his supposed mission to Mayence – The first printing in Paris; William Fichet and John Heinlein – The first French printers; their installation at the Sorbonne and their publications – The movement in France – The illustration of the Book commenced in Italy – The Book in Italy; engraving in relief and metal plates – The Book in Germany: Cologne, Nuremberg, Basle – The Book in the Low Countries – French schools of ornament of the Book; Books of Hours; booksellers at the end of the fifteenth century – Literary taste in titles in France at the end of the fifteenth century – Printers and booksellers' marks – The appearance of the portrait in the Book – Progress in England – Caxton and his followers.

CONSIDERING the influence of printing on the book trade of the fifteenth century, as referred to in the preceding pages, the dealers in manuscripts were not disposed to give way at the first blow. An entire class of workmen would find themselves from day to day without employment if the new art succeeded; these were the copyists, miserable scribes, who for meagre

remuneration frequented the shops of the merchants, where they transcribed manuscripts by the year. Before printing the publication of books was so effected, and the booksellers were rather intermediaries between the copyist and the buyer, than direct dealers having shops and fittings complete. It is evident that they would not provide themselves with these costly books long in advance without being sure of disposing of them.

Small as was the remuneration of the writers, it was much to them; and they were naturally the first to protest against the new invention. At the same time, their opposition and that of the booksellers was soon overcome, swamped, and choked by the growing crowd of printers. Then, as always happens in similar cases, in place of fighting against the current, most of the former workers in manuscript followed it. The writers designed letters for engraving in wood, the booksellers sold the printed works, and some of the illuminators engraved in relief or cast their *histoyres*. For a long time these last continued to decorate books with the ornamental drawings with which they had adorned the manuscripts, and so contributed to form the fine school of illustrators who carried their art to so high a point from the end of the fifteenth century.

As previously related, the revolution of Mayence caused the flight of a crowd of artisans who found their liberty suddenly compromised by the conqueror. The want of money at this time always brought a diminution of patronage, and working printers have been at all times tenacious of their privileges. It

so happened that their guild, in place of remaining established at Mayence many years longer, was, as it were, turned out, scattered to the four cardinal points by the dispersion of its members, and scattered many years before the natural time. In point of fact, in the common order of things, a workman here and there quits the principal workshop to try the world. He makes his way timidly, unconscious apostle of a marvellous art. If he succeeds, he gathers some pupils round him; if he fails, no trace of him remains; in any case invention propagates itself more gradually. With printing it was a thunderclap. Hardly had it made its appearance when the exodus commenced. The greater part of the Mayence men went to Italy: to Subiaco and to Rome, Arnold Pannartz, Conrad Sweynheim, Ulrich Hahn; to Venice, John of Spire, Vendelin of Spire, Christopher Valdarfer, Bernard Pictor (of Augsburg), Erhardt Ratdolt, Peter Loslein; to Ferrara, Andrew Belfort; to Foligno, John Neumeister; Henry Alding tried Sicily; Andrew Vyel, of Worms, printed at Palermo. Lambert Palmart was at Valencia, in Spain, in 1477; Nicholas Spindeler at Barcelona; Peter Hagenbach at Toledo; not far from Mayence – that is, at Cologne – Ulrich Zell, a pupil of Gutenberg, who dated his first work 1466. It was Arnold Ther Hoernen who numbered a book with Arabic figures; it was Koelhof who first used signatures to indicate to the binder the order of the sheets; it was at Eltvil that Henry Bechtermuncze, as we have already said, printed his *Vocabularium* in German, with the types of the *Catholicon*; at Basle, Berthold Rüppel, of Hanau, was the first

established in that city which after Mayence did the most for printing; at Nuremberg, Koburger, who took nearly the first rank among his contemporaries, set as many as twenty-four presses to work, and was named by Badius the prince of printers. And how matters went on! For instance, the very year that followed the death of Gutenberg, monks, the Brothers of the Common Life of Marienthal, in the Rheingau, themselves published a copy of the indulgences accorded by Adolph of Nassau, Archbishop of Mayence. Before 1480, presses were everywhere in Germany: at Prague, Augsburg, Ulm, Lubeck, Essling, etc.

It is to be remarked that the Mayence men did not turn towards Holland. Is it that they found there the descendants of Laurent Coster firmly established in their workshops? Must the coexistence, the simultaneous advance, of the invention in Germany and in the Low Countries be admitted? It is a secret for us and for many others, but we know for certain that Flemish printers were established at Utrecht in 1473, at Delft, Bruges, Gouda, Zwoll, Antwerp, and Brussels. At Louvain there was besides John of Westphalia, who published in 1474 a work of Peter Crescens, and several other works.

Colard Mansion was printing at Bruges about 1473; and was employed by William Caxton, who had been for some years trading as a merchant in the Low Countries, to print the "Recuyell of the Histories of Troy," by Raoul Le Fevre, which Caxton had translated into English at the command of Queen Margaret. This was issued in 1474, and was the first book printed

in the English language. In 1475 or 1476 Caxton returned to England with a fount of types, which he had employed Mansion to cut and cast for him, and established himself as a printer in the precincts of Westminster Abbey. In 1477 he produced the first book printed in England, "The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers," followed by a large number of important works, many of them written or translated by Caxton himself. Thus was typography firmly established in England; and Caxton's immediate successors, Wynken de Worde, Richard Pynson, William Machlinia, have had a glorious roll of followers, which has never been broken to this day. From Westminster the art spread in England to Oxford, where Theodoricus Rood, from Cologne, printed an *Exposicio Sancti Jeronimi* in 1478; and to St. Albans in 1480 by a printer who has never been identified, and who produced the famous "Chronicle" and "Boke of St. Albans."

The invasion, we see, had been most rapid. In less than fifteen years, every important city had followed the movement, and was ready to establish printing offices. If we may credit a certain controverted document, Charles VII. had on the 3rd of October, 1458, sent to Mayence one of the best medal engravers of the Mint of Tours to study the process of which marvels were spoken: "The 3rd of October, 1458, the King having learned that Messire Guthenberg, living at Mayence, in the country of Germany, a dexterous man in carving and making letters with a punch, had brought to light the invention of printing by punches and types, desirous of inquiring into such a treasure, the King

has commanded the generals of his mints to nominate persons well instructed in the said cutting and to send them secretly to the said place to inform themselves of the said mode and invention, to understand and learn the art of them, in order to satisfy the said Lord King; and it was undertaken by Nicholas Jenson, who took the said journey to bring intelligence of the said art and of the execution of it in the said kingdom, which first has made known the said art of impression to the said kingdom of France" (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Hf 467, pp. 410, 411).

Nicholas Jenson on his return met with a cool reception from Louis XI., who did not continue the works of his father. It may be supposed that this coolness was the cause of his expatriating himself and retiring to a place where his industry could be better exercised. Ten years after the above mission we find him established at Venice, his art of engraver of letters joined to that of printer. His Eusebius, translated by Trapezuntius, and his Justinian, were composed in 1470 with such marvellous and clear types that from that day the best typographers have imitated his founts. In spite of its success, he did not confine himself to these letters, but he made use also of Gothic, in which he printed by preference pious books.

In spite of the attempts of Jenson in the name of the King of France – that is, if these attempts ever took place in the manner indicated above – the invention was not known to have commended itself to the powerful university of Paris. In general, and especially for the introduction of innovations in that learned

body, it was necessary to fight, to strike without much chance of success, save in case of having acquaintance in the place. We have seen John Fust, obliged suddenly to retake the road to Germany, in a fair way to find himself taxed with sorcery, not an inconsiderable matter. For others the sale of unauthorised books had had most unhappy consequences unless the Parliament intervened. So ten years had passed since the journey of Jenson, and ten or twelve since the first manifestations of typography at Mayence, without the diabolical discovery finding admittance to the Sorbonne. A still more extraordinary thing, a Cologne printer issued about 1472 a small folio in Gothic type, thirty-one long lines to a page, which was a work written in French. The *Histoires de Troyes* of Raoul Le Fevre, chaplain of the dukes of Burgundy, first found a publisher in Germany, and soon after another in England, before a single press was definitely installed at Paris.

As we have said of Peter Schoeffer, numerous German students were in the university, where they pursued their studies, and frequently remained later as masters. It has been found that in 1458 a former student of Leipzig named John Heinlein, a native of Stein, in the diocese of Spire, entered as regent of the college of Burgundy, from whence he passed to the Sorbonne in 1462, the year of the troubles in Mayence. After the manner of latinising names so common at that time, he called himself Lapidanus, from the name of his native place, which means Stone in German. Heinlein met in Paris a Savoyard, William Fichet, born in 1433 at Petit Bornand, who became an associate of the

Sorbonne about 1461, and finally rector in 1468. These two men were great friends, and their particular instincts attracted them to men of elevated studies. They divined at once the enormous help printing would bring to their work. Besides, it grieved them to see through the whole of France, especially in Touraine, German colporteurs carrying on their trade under cover of other commerce, a practice from which the most grave inconveniences might result. It occurred to them that to prevent fraud they would themselves create a printing establishment; but if they deliberated on it, it must have been in secret, for the registers of the Sorbonne are silent on their enterprise. If Fichet conceived the idea, it may be believed that, from his German origin, Heinlein put it into execution. M. Philippe thinks that he was formerly at Basle. In all probability it was from that city he tried to obtain his workmen. In 1468 six years had elapsed since the craftsmen were dispersed and fled from Mayence. At all events, it was from Basle that Ulrich Gering, Michael Freyburger, and Martin Krantz, printers recommended to the two Sorbonnists, departed, and in due course arrived in Paris. Of these three men, who were the first to establish a printing office on the French side of the Rhine, Ulrich Gering was a student as well as a printer, so was Freyburger, originally of Colmar. Krantz was a letter-founder, and the only real workman of the three companions.

We have often regretted with regard to these men, as also to Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer, that no really authentic portrait

has transmitted their features to us. Every one will recall the fur cap and loose pantaloons of the mediocre statue at Mayence, but there is really no portrait of Gutenberg. As to Gering, M. Philippe, in his *Histoire de l'Origine de l'Imprimerie à Paris*, publishes a grotesque figure muffled in the ruff of the sixteenth century, after a picture preserved at Lucerne, but for which much cannot be said. Lacaille, in his *Histoire de l'Imprimerie*, gives a full-length portrait of Gering, said to be taken from a painting in the College Montagu.

The workshop of the three Germans was set up within the walls of the Sorbonne —*in ædibus Sorbonnicis*— in 1469. There they set to work at once, their printing establishment consisting simply of a room, none too light, a table, a press, and formes. Krantz doubtless struck the types chosen by the Sorbonnists, for there were then in use two sorts of letters: German Gothic and Roman. They kept to the Roman, as being more round and clear; and as soon as they obtained matrices and cast their type, they entered on their task with ardour.

The tendencies of Fichet and Heinlein were not towards transcendent theology, but rather towards the literature of the ancients and contemporary rhetorical works. Besides, it may be said, considering that men are far from perfect, Fichet counted on making the authorised presses serve his own purpose. We find him publishing a treatise on rhetoric in quarto in 1471; meantime he supervised the work confided to his artists. They commenced with a large volume of "Letters" of Gasparin of Bergamo, which

was set up in quarto with the Roman type, the form of which had been accepted. At the end of the work, the impression of which cost much time – possibly a year – the three printers placed a quatrain in Latin distichs, which is at once a statement of identity and a promise for the future.

If we try to apportion to each of the three printers his share in the making of the book, it may be supposed that the intellectual part of the composition and the correction fell to Freyburger and Gering, while the heavier work of founding, placing in formes, and press work fell to Krantz. This essay, satisfactory as it appeared, was far from perfection. The first Parisian printers had multiplied abbreviations and irregular contractions, and enormous difficulties and inevitable faults ensued. Further, either they had more than one punch, or the leaden matrix was deformed, for the characters frequently differ. At the same time, we must commend them for having used the *æ* and *œ*, which were uniformly written *e* in the manuscripts, thus giving rise to errors without number. Their punctuation was the comma, semicolon, and full stop.

Fichet and Heinlein had become the modest librarians of the Sorbonne, and this new employment gave them greater facilities for surveillance. The printing office did not remain inactive. It issued successively the "Orthography" of Gasparin of Bergamo, the "Letters" of Phalaris, two books of Æneas Sylvius, the "Conspiracy of Catiline" of Sallust, the "Epitome of Titus Livius" of Florus, and finally the "Rhetorics" of William Fichet,

which, if we may credit a letter addressed to Bessarion, was finished in 1471. Following came the "Letters" of Bessarion, the *Elegantia Latinæ Linguae* of Valla, the first folio volume from the Sorbonne presses; and others, thirteen volumes in 1470-71 and seventeen in 1472.

At the end of 1472 the workshop was somewhat broken up, Fichet having left for Rome and Heinlein preaching in Germany. The three printers had shown by their works that they were in earnest; besides, they had from the first gratuitously distributed copies among the nobles, who, being accustomed to pay highly for manuscripts, did not fail to note the difference. The associates then resolved to quit the Sorbonne and create an establishment for themselves; their patrons being no longer there to sustain them in case of failure, and in giving up their presses and types it may be judged that they were not without anxiety on that point.

Their oldest dated book, the *Manipulus Curatorum* of Montrochet, was also the first that they printed in their new quarters, at the sign of the "Golden Sun" in the Rue St. Jacques. They remained united up to the year 1477, when Gering alone printed at the "Golden Sun," but he obtained associates, George Mainyal in 1480 and Berthold Rembold in 1494, who lived with him in the Rue de la Sorbonne, where he established himself on leaving the Rue St. Jacques. Ulrich Gering died on the 23rd of August, 1510, after a half-century of work.

The movement inaugurated by the Sorbonne was promptly followed. German workmen opened their shops nearly

everywhere in France; then the French themselves scattered. At Lyons in 1472 a Frenchman was established, the same at Angers, Caen, Metz, Troyes, Besançon, and Salins. But in the central provinces we find Henry Mayer at Toulouse, John Neumeister at Albi; in the east Metlinger at Dijon; and Michael Wensler, of Basle, at Macon, among others, about 1493.

We have now arrived at an epoch of greater efforts. The Lyons printers used ornamental letters, from which were developed engravings in the Book. Since the block books illustration had been neglected, as the means were wanting to distribute the plates here and there in the forme; Schoeffer still employed initial letters in wood very like vignettes. John Fust was now dead, but Peter Schoeffer continued to print without intermission.

If we search for the precise epoch in which illustration appeared in the history of the Book, we shall perhaps have to go back to the time of Albert Pfister, printer of Bamberg, who issued in 1461 an edition of the "Fables of Ulrich Böhner" with a hundred and one figures on wood. This may be said to be the unconscious combination of xylography with typography, a kind of transformation of old elements to new things without other importance; art had no place in this adaptation.

Up to this time Germany had not, in its school of painters or miniaturists, men capable of giving a personal impulse to ornament. In the German editions of the block books the influence of Van Eyck had made itself felt very sensibly, and the Flemish had preserved their supremacy on this point; on the

other hand, the German printers who went to seek their fortune in Italy fell into the middle of a circle admirably prepared to receive them and to communicate their ideas to them. It is believed that the first book printed in Italy with woodcuts in the text and with an ascertained date is the work of a German established at Rome, Ulrich Hahn, in 1467. An account in the *Annuaire du Bibliophile*, which, being without citation of authority, we quote for what it is worth, relates that Ulrich Hahn was established as a printer at Vienna about 1462, but was driven thence by the publication of a pamphlet against the burgomaster of the city, and was attracted to Rome by Torquemada, who confided to him the impression of his work the *Meditationes*. Hahn was an engraver, as were also most of his *confrères* at that time – that is, he cut in relief designs to be intercalated in the text – and Passavant relates that the designs of the *Meditationes* were from compositions of Fra Angelico, who died in 1455. Be that as it may, the book, the printing of which was finished on St. Sylvester's Day, 1467, is the first known with engravings, and only three copies of it exist: one at Vienna, one at Nuremberg, and one in Lord Spencer's library; it is composed in Gothic type in folio.

Illustration found a true artist at Verona, Matteo Pasti, who furnished designs for a volume on military art by Valturius, printed in Roman characters in folio, at the expense of John of Verona, and dedicated to Sigismond Pandolfi. Pasti's eighty-two figures are simple outlines, and we here reproduce one of the principal – an archer shooting at a butt. Published in 1472, the

volume of Valturius followed soon after the *Meditationes*, but the engravings enable us to see how the Italian process, consisting mostly of lines without shadows, differed from the Dutch and German. One thing to be remarked here is the purity of the design, in spite of the roughness of the engraving; we see in these figures Italian art at its height, despite the somewhat coarse translation of the wood-cutter.

At Venice the German inventors had reaped their harvest. At the end of the fifteenth century, fifty years after the invention of typography, the printing offices and booksellers' shops were counted by hundreds. It was in this city that for the first time a title with frontispiece carrying indication of the contents, the place, the date, and the name of the printer, was given to the Book. We give here this ornamental title, placed before a *Calendario* of John de Montereio, printed by Pictor, Loslein, and Ratdolt in 1476, folio.

The German Erhardt Ratdolt was probably the promoter of these innovations. He soon afterwards published the first geometrical book with figures, the "Elements of Euclid," 1482, folio; in the same year he produced the *Poeticon Astronomicum* of Hyginus, previously printed at Ferrara, with illustrations on wood of excellent design, but laboriously and unskilfully engraved. Yet the art of the Book could not remain mediocre in this city, where the artists were creating marvels. John of Spire and afterwards Nicholas Jenson, the emigrant from France, of whom we have spoken above, had created, after Italian manuscripts,

that Roman letter, the primitive type of which has come down to our time very little retouched. At the death of Jenson in 1481, his materials passed into the hands of Andrew d'Asola, called Andrea Torresani, who did not allow the good traditions of his master to die, and who produced among others a book bearing signatures, catchwords, and paging ("Letters of St. Jerome," 1488). Torresani was the father-in-law of Aldus Manutius, who was to be for ever illustrious in the art of printing at Venice, and raised his art to the highest perfection.

But if decoration by means of relief blocks found a favourable reception in Italy and, above all, a group of artists capable of carrying it to success, there were at the same time other experiments conceived in a different way. The discovery of Maso Finiguerra gave to the art a new process of reproduction, and printing presses had now to render possible and practicable the working of engraved plates. In order to make that which follows comprehensible, we enter into a few technical details, the whole subject having been so admirably and fully treated by MM. Delaborde and Duplessis.

In the engraved wood block, as in the printing type, it is a projection in the wood or metal which, being inked and passed under a press, leaves on paper its lines in black. Naturally then the intercalation of an engraving of this kind in typographical composition is made without difficulty, and the impression of both is taken at once. On the other hand, a line engraving is obtained from incised lines on a plate of copper; that is, an

instrument called a burin traces the lines, which are filled with greasy ink. These incised lines only are inked. The surface of the plate is cleaned off to avoid smudging. The sheet of paper destined for the impression has then to be made very pliable, so that at the striking of the press it runs, so to speak, to find the ink in the lines and hold it. It is therefore impossible to take a text from relief characters at the same time as an engraved plate.

However, this kind of reproduction, which, contrary to that from wood, allowed of half-tints or toning down, attracted in good time the workers at the Book. It appeared to them possible to reconcile the two printings by the successive passage of the same sheet of paper through the press, to receive at first the impression from the type and afterwards to find the ink deposited in the incisions in the copper. The first manifestation of this new method of illustration was made at Florence, the home of line engraving, by Nicholas di Lorenzo in 1477, for the work of Antonio Bettini, of Siena, called *El Monte Santo di Dio*. Here the artists were never known. Common opinion has it that Baccio Baldini borrowed from Sandro Botticelli the subjects of his plates. Italian engraving always seeks its source in Pollajuolo, Botticelli, and Baldini. It is not the simple work of a niellist, but it had not yet reached perfection either in the work or in the impression; the illustrations of the *Monte Santo* are proof of this, as are also those of the *Dante*, by Baldini, in 1481, for the same Nicholas di Lorenzo. From this we reproduce the Misers.

At this epoch engravings from the burin were taken with a

pale ink, the composition of which is very different from the fine black ink of Schoeffer as well as of the old Italian printers. And besides in most cases the proofs were obtained with the *frotton*, like the ancient block books, an eminently defective process. The press was not yet well adapted to the delicate work of line engraving, and the workmen, who did not apply the plates until after the text was printed, preferred not to risk the loss of their sheets by the use of inappropriate presses. These, with the insignificant attempts made by the Germans in 1479,² are the beginnings of the process of line engraving in the ornamentation of the Book. In fact, the process failed to take its due position for want of a more convenient mode of working. Relief engraving had got ahead; with it the sheets used for the impression did not require working more than once to register the figures with the text; in a word, the labour was not so great. A century had to pass before line engraving completely dethroned the vignette on wood, a century in which the latter attained its height, and showed what able artisans could make of a process apparently the least flexible.

Not to leave Italy, which had the honour of making the book with engraved illustrations known to the world, we pass by some years, during which Arnold Bucking gave at Rome a *Cosmographia* of Ptolemy, 1478, with incised plates, which is the first printed atlas that was produced, whilst as regards ordinary publications there appeared in all parts classical and

² *Breviarium ecclesie Herbipolensis*: Et. Dold., 1479, folio, copper plate engravings.

Italian works, such as Cicero, Virgil, Tacitus, Pliny, Eusebius, among the ancients, and Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, etc., among moderns. Among the editions of Dante, we may cite that of Peter of Cremona, dated 18th November, 1491, with one engraving to each canto, of which the earlier are after Botticelli, and perhaps drawn by him directly on the wood. Passavant believes these figures to be cut in relief in the metal. On some of the plates there is a signature, a Gothic **b**, the signification of which leaves a free field for conjecture, and perhaps for error. Copies of this book with the complete series of twenty plates are extremely rare; one in the Hamilton Palace Library sold in May, 1884, for £380; the Royal Library of Berlin recently agreed to pay £1,200 for a proof set of the plates.

As we shall see later apropos of German vignettes of the same period, the characteristic of Italian engraving was sobriety, the complete absence of useless work and the great simplicity of the human figure. This special manner will be found in the famous edition of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francis Colonna, printed in 1499 by Aldus, copied sixty years later by a French printer, and lately reproduced in reduced size.

The Italian illustrators, whether they were working in wood, or, as some writers have it, in metal, adroitly brought their figures forward by contrasting some rudimentary work in the persons with the more accentuated and often stippled ground, which formed a dark background. This was also the ordinary process in their ornaments, among the most interesting of which are the

borders of the plates to an edition of Dante by Bonino de Bonini, Brescia, 1487, of which a specimen is here reproduced.

If we return from Italy, which then took the lead, to Germany, a school of *Formschneiders* is found about the year 1470 at Augsburg, whose secluded workshops were of no benefit to the booksellers. These ill-advised artisans went still further. Apparently furious to see printing so widely spread as to render their bad woodcuts difficult to get rid of, they united in a body to interdict Gunther Zainer and Schüssler from putting engravings into their books. They must nevertheless have come to an ultimate arrangement, for Zainer printed in 1477 a book on chess by Jacopo da Cessole, with vignettes. He was one of the few German printers who employed Roman characters in place of the Gothic of Peter Schoeffer. At Cologne in 1474 Arnold Ther Hoernen published a work entitled *Fasciculus Temporum*, with small illustrations engraved on wood. A Bible without date contains most interesting illustrations. As to the celebrated *Todtentantz*, or "Dance of Death," published about 1485, it contains forty-one relief plates of the most ordinary kind, the same as in the "Chronicle of Cologne" of 1499, of which the figures, though less German, less distorted, are worth little compared with those of the Nuremberg books, more German, but more artistic.

At Nuremberg, Antony Koburger, called by Badius the prince of booksellers, directed an immense establishment, employing more than a hundred workmen, without counting smaller houses

at Basle and Lyons. Koburger was a capable and a fortunate man. He had at first put forth a Bible very indifferently illustrated with the cuts of the Cologne Bible, but he had before him something better than copying others. Michael Wohlgemuth, born at Nuremberg in 1434, was then in the full vigour of his talent. To his school the young Albert Dürer came to study; and as he was able to draw on wood as well as to engrave on copper and paint on panel, Koburger was attracted to him, and engaged him to make a set of illustrations for a book. The projected work was the *Schatzbehalter*, a sort of ascetic compilation, without interest, without arrangement. Michael Wohlgemuth set to work; and, thanks to the ability of his engravers, of whom William Pleydenwurff was probably one, Koburger was able to put the book on sale in the course of 1491 in three hundred and fifty-two folios of two columns. Without being perfection, the designs of Wohlgemuth, very German, very striking, present the vigour and merit of the future school of Nuremberg. The figure is no longer a simple line, in the manner of the block books, but a combination of interlaced cuttings, intended to imitate colour. Those representing the creation of Eve and the daughter of Jephthah are here reproduced. In the search for harmony between the text and engravings of this curious work, we shall find grace and gaiety laid aside, on the other hand a freedom and boldness that interest and permit us to appreciate at their value the Nuremberg artists and Koburger, the printer. In fact, the German artists are more individual, each one taken by himself,

than the Italian illustrators could be, condemned as they were to the hierarchical commonplace and to a certain form of idealism into which the art of Italy entered little by little. The German painters, naturalists and believers, presented their heroes in the image of that robust nature that was before their eyes. It was in this rude and unpolished spirit that Michael Wohlgemuth decorated the *Schatzbehalter*; he also composed the designs for the "Nuremberg Chronicle" of Dr. Hartman Schedel, printed by Koburger in 1493.

With Dürer, at the latter end of the fifteenth century, the Book was no more than a pretext for engravings. Thausing, his biographer, says that the great artist felt the necessity of designing an Apocalypse at Rome at the time that Luther was premeditating his religious revolution in face of the worldly splendours of the pontifical court. The "Apocalypse," published in 1511 in Latin, with Gothic characters, was an album of fifteen large wood engravings. The Four Horsemen is the best of these plates, and the boldest; but in this gross fancy, in these poor halting old hacks, the fantastic and grand idea which the artist meant to convey can hardly be seen. It may be said the genius of Dürer was little adapted to vignettes, however large they were, and did not easily lend itself to the exigencies of a spun-out subject. The title of his "Apocalypse" is of its kind a curious example of German genius, but, in spite of its vigour, it does not please like an Italian headpiece or like a French or Flemish frontispiece. The other works of Dürer published in the fifteenth

century, "The Life of the Virgin" and "The Passion," were also sets of prints that received a text in the sixteenth century.

For the rest of his illustrations Dürer belongs to the sixteenth century, and we shall have occasion to recur to his works. At present it remains to speak of a curious work printed at Basle by Bergman de Olpe in 1497, which appears to be the first comic conception of fifteenth century artists: the *Navis Stultifera*, or "Ship of Fools," of Sebastian Brandt. This work of the school of Basle lacks neither originality nor vigour. At the time when it was published its success was immense, from the strange tricks of its clowns, with fools' caps, with which every page was adorned. Alas! the best things fall under the satire of these jesters, even the Book and the lover of books, if we may judge by the sarcasms against useless publications volleyed by the personage here reproduced. "I have the first place among fools... I possess heaps of volumes that I rarely open. If I read them, I forget them, and I am no wiser." Brunet sees in these humorous caricatures more art than is really to be found in them. Their value is owing more to their spirit and humour than to any other artistic merit. Even the engraving is singularly fitted to the subject, with its peculiar cutting, somewhat executed in hairlines. The designer was certainly not a Holbein, but he is no longer the primitive artisan of the first German plates, and his freedom is not displeasing.

We have before spoken, apropos of engraving by the burin in Italy, of the small share of Germany in the essay at illustration

by that means, and we do not see a real and serious attempt in the two little coats of arms in copper plate in the *Missale Herbipolense*, printed in 1479.

The Flemish had not taken any great flights in the midst of this almost European movement. The school of Burgundy, whose influence was felt in all the surrounding countries, had lost its authority in consequence of the progress realized at Mayence. Without doubt the great Flemish artists were there, but they were honoured painters, and their inclination did not descend to seeking the booksellers beyond making them offers of service. Besides, the first of these, officially established in Flanders, were two Germans, John of Westphalia and John Veldener, of Cologne, who established themselves in the university of Louvain in 1473, three years after the first Paris printers. John of Westphalia, who took his own portrait for his mark, edited the *Fasciculus Temporum*, a book which had enormous success in the fifteenth century.

At Haarlem, in spite of the block books attributed to Laurent Coster, illustration was backward. About 1485, a Dutch translation of the *Malheurs de Troye* of Le Fevre was put on sale. This French book was published at Cologne before France possessed the smallest typographical workshop. At Bruges Colard Mansion illuminated the cuts of his *Metamorphoses* of Ovid in 1484. Simple engraving appeared to him far remote from manuscripts of which the vogue had not yet passed away. At Zwoll Peter van Os, the publisher, cut up and used the

xylographic plates of the *Biblia Pauperum*, while the master *à la navette*, John of Cologne, an artist in the best sense of the word, was ornamenting certain popular publications with his designs. At Utrecht Veldener came from Louvain to establish a workshop. He published for the second time a *Fasciculus* in 1480; he created a style of decoration with flowers and leaves, which shortly after developed into the trade of *Rahmenschneiders*. Antwerp had attracted Gerard de Leeu from Gouda, and he produced the romance of *Belle Vienne*. Schiedam had an inventive engraver who illustrated an edition of the *Chevalier Delibéré* of Oliver de la Marche, in folio, with Gothic letters, after 1483, as we read in the colophon: —

"Cet traittié fut parfait l'an mil
Quatre cens quatre vings et trois
Ainsi que sur la fin d'avril
Que l'yver est en son exil,
Et que l'esté fait ses exploits.
Au bien soit pris en tous endrois
De ceulx à qui il est offert
Par celui qui *Tant a souffert*,

La Marche."

The French language, bright and harmonious, thus found hospitality in other countries. For many examples of French books published abroad, we cannot cite one German work printed in France. Spreading from the north to the south,

typography had from 1490 its two principal centres at Paris and Lyons. After the success of the three Germans at the Sorbonne, events took their own course. In 1474 Peter Cæsar and John Stol, two students who had been instructed by Gering and Krantz, founded the second establishment in Paris, at the sign of the "Soufflet Vert;" and they printed classical works. Ten years later appeared Antony Vérard, Simon Vostre, and Pigouchet, the first of whom gave to French bookselling an impulse that it has not since lost; but before them Pasquier-Bonhomme published his *Grandes Chroniques* in 1476, three volumes folio, the oldest in date of books printed at Paris in French.

The French school of illustration was at its most flourishing point at the end of the fifteenth century, but solely in miniature and ornamentation by the pencil. The charming figures of the manuscripts had at this time a Flemish and naturalistic tendency. The most celebrated of the great artists in manuscripts, John Foucquet, could not deny the source of his talent nor the influence of the Van Eyck school, yet the touch remained distinctly personal. He had travelled, and was not confined to the art circles of a single city, as were so many of the earliest painters of Flanders. He had gone through Italy, and from thence he transported architectural subjects for his curious designs in the *Heures* of Etienne Chevalier, now at Frankfort; a precious fragment of it is preserved in the National Library of Paris. Side by side with this undoubted master, whose works are happily known, lived a more modest artist: John Perréal, called John of

Paris, painter to Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Anne of Brittany.

In joining with these two masters, to serve as a transition between Foucquet and Perréal, John Bourdichon, designer to the kings of France from Louis XI. to Francis I., we obtain already a not despicable assemblage of living forces. Without doubt these men were not comparable either with the admirable school of Flanders, or the Germans of Nuremberg, or the masters of Italy; but, moderate as we may deem their merit, they did their tasks day by day, painting miniatures, colouring coats of arms, rendering to the kings, their masters, all the little duties of devoted servants without conceit, and preparing, according to their means, the great artistic movement in France of the seventeenth century. That these men, leaving the brush for the pencil, devoted themselves to design figures on wood, is undeniable. It is said that one of them followed Charles VIII. to the Italian wars, and probably sketched the battles of the campaign as they took place. Now in the books published at this epoch in France we meet with vignettes which so very nearly approach miniatures, that we can easily recognise in them French taste and finish. Such are, for example, the illustrations of the *Mer des Histoires*

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